Claims 7, 9-11, 16 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over OTSUKA *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,841,557) in view of CHRAPLYVY *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,907,420). Claims 2-6, 15 and 17-19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over OTSUKA *et al.* in view of CHRAPLYVY *et al.* and further in view of MELI *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,946,117). Claims 12 and 21-25 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over OTSUKA *et al.* in view of CHRAPLYVY *et al.* and further in view of BAKER (U.S. Patent No. 5,452,124). Claims 13, 26 and 28 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over OTSUKA *et al.* in view of CHRAPLYVY *et al.* and further in view of ONAKA *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,886,804). By way of the present amendment, Applicants propose canceling claims 2-7, 9-13, 15-26 and 28. Therefore, after entry of the present amendment, the rejection of these claims will be moot. Withdrawal of the rejections of claims 2-7, 9-13, 15-26 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is, thus, respectfully requested.

Claims 29-40 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over CLARK (U.S. Patent No. 6,041,152) in view of ZIRNGIBL (U.S. Patent No. 5,550,666) or SUZUKI *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,786,918). By the present amendment, Applicants propose canceling claims 29-34. Therefore, after entry of the present amendment, the rejection of these claims will be moot. Applicants, however, respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 35-40.

In rejecting claim 35, the Office Action admits that CLARK does not disclose "optical line amplifiers associated with each of fine WDM units." The Office Action, however, cites

ZIRNGIBL and SUZUKI *et al.* as allegedly supplying this feature. Applicants respectfully traverse and submit that neither ZIRNGIBL nor SUZUKI *et al.* suggests or discloses "amplifying each of said subgroups of optical signals using a different optical line amplifier for each subgroup" as recited in claim 35.

Applicants submit that ZIRNGIBL discloses only optical detectors and does not disclose "optical line amplifiers" as recited in claim 35. ZIRNGIBL discloses a demultiplexer 165 that directs optical signals to an optical transceiver 340 that further includes a router 335. Router 335 further directs the optical signals received from demultiplexer 165 to "optical amplifiers" 333. As shown in FIG. 3, and described at column 10, lines 38-58, the supposed "optical amplifiers" of ZIRNGIBL consist of detectors that each detect an optical signal that flows through router 335 to provide an electrical signal that corresponds to each of the received optical signals. The electrical signals produced by the "optical amplifiers" 333 are further routed through electrical lines 361 to electrical receivers 360 (see column 10, lines 48-53). Therefore, in spite of being referred to as "optical amplifiers," the supposed "optical amplifiers" of ZIRNGIBL consist of a plurality of optical detectors, where each optical detector converts a respective received optical signal into an electrical signal. The amplifiers of ZIRNGIBL, thus, do not include "optical line amplifiers" that amplify "subgroups of optical signals using a different optical line amplifier for each subgroup" as recited in claim 35.

Applicants further submit that SUZUKI *et al.* discloses only electrical signal amplifiers that amplify electrical timing signals and does not disclose "optical line amplifiers" as recited in claim 35. SUZUKI *et al.* discloses an optical communications system that includes optical *time-division* demultiplexers 402 and 403 that are respectively connected to optical receivers

404 and 405 (see FIG. 1). The time-division demultiplexers 402 and 403 of SUZUKI *et al.* further include amplifiers 408 and 409 that amplify 5 GHz clock pulses to produce sine wave voltages that drive the demultiplexers 402 and 403 (see column 7, lines 4-14). The amplifiers 408 and 409 of SUZUKI *et al.*, thus, consist of electrical signal amplifiers that amplify timing signals that drive the time-division multiplexers. Amplifiers 408 and 409, therefore, do not consist of "optical line amplifiers" that amplify subgroups of optical signals as recited in claim 35.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that neither ZIRNGIBL nor SUZUKI *et al.* suggests or discloses "amplifying each of said subgroups of optical signals using a different optical line amplifier for each subgroup" as recited in claim 35. Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 35 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is, therefore, respectfully requested.

Claims 36-40 depend from independent claim 35. Applicants, therefore, respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of these claims for at least the reasons stated above with respect to claim 35.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request that this amendment be entered. Applicants further request the Examiner's reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections, and the timely allowance of this application. Applicants submit that the proposed amendments do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additionally search of the art by the Examiner. Furthermore, Applicants submit that the entry of this amendment would place the application in better form for appeal in the event that the application is not allowed.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136 is hereby made. Please change any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1070 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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